DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 206 077 EA 013 814

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TITLE Power and the Educational Administrator: Bureaucracy, Loose Coupling or Cultural Negotiation?
PUB DATE Apr 81
NOTE 33p.: Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Los Angeles, CA, April 13-17, 1981).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Role; Administrators; Bureaucracy; *Cultural Influences; Educational Administration; Models; Organization; *Organizational Communication; *Organizational Theories; *Power Structure; Social Influences; Social Values
IDENTIFIERS *Loose Coupling Theory

ABSTRACT

Dominant theories of educational administration have viewed the field as a rational and technical science concerned with the bureaucratic control of education. These theories have recently come under attack for ideological and empirical reasons. More current theories characterize educational administration as less rational objective, and structured and emphasize the "loose coupling" of the units or events within education and the tighter coupling of education as a whole with the external environment. The theory of loose coupling can be taken a step further to the "cultural coupling" theory maintaining that educational organizations, although they may have tight internal coupling, respond not to technical or rational demands but to the external demands of the surrounding culture. This theory of cultural coupling refers to the employment of myths, metaphors, and ceremonial categories as processes of coupling among educational organizations and between these institutions and their environments. This view of educational administration sees administrators as negotiating cultural claims and legitimizing them within the school. This model may help reconcile the long-standing divergence of administrative theory from practice. (Author/JM)

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ED206077

POWER AND THE EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATOR:

BUREAUCRACY, LOOSE COUPLING OR CULTURAL NEGOTIATION?

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Paper presented to the Organisational Theory Special Interest Group, American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, Los Angeles, April 1981

EA 013 514

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Introduction

Models are persuasive. They not only explain, they also convince. The language, metaphors and rituals they promote entrap us in particular world views. Wittgenstein claimed for philosophers the task of preventing 'the bewitchment of our intelligence by the means of language', but such a responsibility is one to be shared far more widely.

For some decades now the model dominant in the imaginations of administrators has been derived from bureaucratic, positivistic, systems theory. Fundamental to the model are the twin concepts of scientific understanding and prediction and of technological production and control. To judge from standard texts in administration the ubiquity of the model allows its classification as an administrative equivalent of Kuhn's (1962) notion of a 'normal science'. Certainly it appears to have provided several generations of adminstrators with an 'ideal typical' explanatory structure, a standardised method of analysis, a legitimating ideology and a rhetoric of control.

Recently widespread dissatisfaction has developed with the adequacy of the model's explanatory power, the accuracy of descriptions based on its procedures of analysis, the neutralising effects of its ideology and the inequity of its processes of control (Bates, 1980a, 1980b; Charters, 1978; Erickson, 1979; Foster, 1980).

Such dissatisfaction is not restricted to the field of educational administration but is also to be heard within the debate over management science and public administration (Clegg and Dunkerley, 1977; Denhardt and Denhardt, 1979; Foster, 1980; Wood and Kelly, 1978). The issue at the heart of this debate is identified in Foster's assertion that:

> A critical evaluation of management science and administrative studies, including those pertinent to education, reveals a peculiar weakness, where, in the pursuit of scientific status, the cultural ramifications of functioning organisations are ignored.
>
> (Foster, 1980: 12)

It is the argument of this paper that recent challenges to the adequacy of scientific theory as a model for the analysis and practice of educational administration are the precursors of something akin to Kuhn's identification of a paradigm shift. It is further argued that this shift will rapidly take us through the labyrinth of loose-coupling towards an alternative understanding of administration as cultural negotiation.

The Dominant Paradigm

The traditionally dominant paradigm of educational administration has two faces. The first is turned towards the pursuit of a theory of administration based on models drawn from natural science. The particular features of this model emphasised by its advocates as desirable criteria which a scientific theory of educational administration should strive to meet are contained in a number of key ideas. These centre around ideals of a coherent and unified body of knowledge achieved through the impartial examination of theoretical approaches to reality which can be checked through objective measurement and observation conducted according to universally accepted criteria of truth and validity. Such ideas are argued by some as allowing the establishment of an agreed set of axioms from which a completely deductive theoretical system can be derived (Blalock, 1969; Griffiths, 1977; Hoy, 1978; cf. Bates, 1980a). The pursuit of such a 'scientific' model is continued by a number of academics but it is widely recognised that the quest for a scientific theory of educational administration is collapsing both under the weight of its own pretensions and in the face of serious challenges in its 'parent' field (Bates, 1980a; Griffiths, 1979; Halpin and Hayes, 1977).

The other face of the dominant model seems unlikely, however, to suffer a rapid eclipse. This second face is directed towards the achievement of a technology of control. Although couched in terms such

as scientific management (Taylor, 1911) and justified through appeals to the logical positivism presumed to underlie scientific procedures (Simon, 1965; March and Simon, 1958) the major thrust of theory in educational administration has been towards a technology of control (Bates, 1980b, 1980c; Foster, 1980; Giroux, 1979; Pusey, 1980, 1981). Indeed the dominant conviction of educational administrators supported by such theory seems to be that 'the essence of being a good technocrat is to exercise control' (Wolcott, 1977: 159).

Such control is represented in the literature as a purely cognitive activity where fact is separated from value, ends from means and a neutral objectivity in decision making achieved (see Simon 1965; March and Simon, 1958). In essence the technological face of the dominant administrative model is one derived from Weber's (1946) model of bureacracy. It is however dissociated from Weber's caveat that far from being a neutral activity the:

> bureacratisation of administration is deliberately connected with the. . . existing groupings of power [whose concerns are] how to exploit the special knowledge of experts without having to abdicate in their favour.
> (Weber in Gerth and Mills, 1946: 235)

Such a model of administration not only ignores Weber's observation but, through its claim to neutrality, disguises and perpetuates particular hidden interests:

> While the interests behind the historical development of technocratic rationality are rather clear, it appears that the historical roots of its more contemporary versions have been forgotten. . .This form of social amnesia not only characterises technocratic rationality it also shapes the conditions under which it sustains itself.
> (Giroux, 1979: 14)

The pervasiveness of technological rationality is argued to be a dominant feature of industrial and post-industrial societies (Habermas, 1968; Pusey, 1980, 1981). Its main features are related to the dominance of a particular epistemology (logical positivism); a particular form of

explantion (systems theory); a particular system of production (capitalism) and a particular form of depoliticized social control (representative democracy) (Bates 1980b, 1980c; Bowers, 1978; Giroux, 1979; Habermas, 1968; Popkewitz, 1978, 1979).

As far as administrative structures are concerned the main thrust of technological rationality is towards a model of organisation in which

> the central feature. . .is the notion that complex social systems can be synthesised from smaller socio-technical units and that they can be controlled in what they do.
>
> (Ammentorp, Popper and Morris, 1979)

The mechanism through which such control is exercised is that of hierarchy:

> Organisations like all systems have a hierarchical structure that results from factoring global objectives into a hierarchy of more manageable sub-objectives. What we view as organisational structure - the compartmentalisation of the organisations resources, and the responsibility for achieving assigned objectives - represents an effort to implement the results of the factoring process.
>
> (Emery, 1969; 21)

The logic of the approach is that of the factory where the specification, production and integration of various components in the construction of a complex whole is the task of the organisation. As Ammentorp, Popper and Morris point out, the control structure is central to the process.

> How. . .control problems are attacked in manufacturing organisations is easy enough to observe. Any complex product is the result of many sub-operations that, in the final assembly, appear as components. Each of these operations is capable of standing alone as a controllable activity. These sub-operations can themselves dealt with as units that are organisations further fractionated into components with an attending specialisation in the division of labour. It is here that principles of resource allocation and control are applied as management attempts to arrive at a finished product by some least-cost criteria.
>
> (Ammentorp, Popper and Morris, 1980; 85)

The importation of this form of technological or systems rationality into the theory and practice of educational administration is a matter of historical record (Bates, 1980c; Callaghan, 1962; Getzels, 1977; Katz, 1971, 1975; Tyack, 1974, 1977; Tyack and Hansot, 1980). Its contemporary home is clearly in the political/administrative arena of accountability, evaluation and control (Apple, 1979; Bates, 1981a; Murphy, 1980; Spady and Mitchell, 1980; Wise, 1980). Metaphors drawn from the language of control theory are pervasive in educational administration especially those deriving from production models (see Taylor, 1980). The model of technical production and control is ubiquitious and deeply seated in educational administration.

The two faces of theory in the dominant paradigm of educational administration - scientific prediction and technical control - meet therefore in the importation of technological rationality into the management of schooling. Adherence to the model is widespread.

Challenges to its supremacy are far more recent and have taken two distinct forms. The first challenge takes issue with ideological implications of the model and may be called, in a non-pejorative sense - the ideological challenge. The second challenge takes issue with the model's veracity as a description of educational systems and might well be called the empirical challenge. Both challenges lead towards a theory of educational administration based upon a cultural analysis of schooling.

The Ideological Challenge

The ideological challenge to systems models of technological rationality in educational administration is derived from challenges to its underlying premises. For the most part these premises are being challenged in the parent disciplines from which educational administration

has borrowed.

Firstly, the epistemological basis of the model of science adopted by educational administrators is under attack in the world of science. A number of philosophers of science have recently challenged the adequacy of logical positivism as an exclusive foundation for understanding the world (Feyerabend, 1975; Hanson, 1958; Kuhn, 1962; Lakatos and Musgrave, 1970; Polanyi, 1958; Polanyi and Prosch, 1975; Popper, 1963, 1972, 1976). The range of criticism is considerable as is the variety of alternatives advocated. These range from a denial of the objectivity of science (Polanyi 1958) through a position of conceptual relativism (Kuhn, 1962) to a position of epistemological anarchism (Feyerabend, 1975). Others, while rejecting the claims of logical positivism to be an exclusive means to truth, also reject the extreme claims of the epistemological relativists (Popper, 1962; Phillips, 1977; Toulmin, 1972). What is clear is that the epistemology which underpins the paradigm of normal science on which many of the attempts to derive a scientific theory of educational administation are based is by no means as secure as was assumed.

Secondly, the model of systems theory is under attack for its assumption of consensus (which is frequently regarded as a gloss on the interests of dominant social groups), its emphasis on stability and equilibrium (and thus its support of most forms of the status quo), and above all for its model of society as a self-regulating, essentially technological rather than historical system (see Gouldner, 1976). The dominance of systems theory as a model of social events is regarded as a 'negative utopia of technical control over history' (Habermas, 1971) in which:

> Man appears not only as homo-faber objectifying himself in his achievements and products, but as homo-fabricatus totally integrated into his technical apparatus.
>
> (McCarthy, 1978; 10-11)

Indeed the integration of logical positivism with systems theory leads to a specific social stance which gives great offence to many critics: implicit support for conservative social orders and an antipathy to change (Horkheimer, 1974).

Thirdly, critics have argued that underlying the principles of production in a capitalist society is a system of exchange which inevitably leads to the alienation of substantial numbers of individuals who are treated as objects or inputs into a system of production rather than as people who are capable of communal and historical activity. Moreover the pursuit of profit as the fundamental objective of capitalism is argued to be increasingly difficult and potentially in conflict with the democratic political institutions with which it has been historically associated (Edwards, 1979; Habermas, 1976; Wright, 1978). The argument leads to the fourth challenge. That is to the incompatibility of ideas of participatory democracy with those of technically managed social structure. The legitimation crisis produced by this conflict has been widely discussed (Crozier, 1975; Gouldner, 1970, 1976; Habermas, 1976; Pusey, 1980, 1981). It revolves around the importance of human volition against the emergence of something akin to Althusser's (1969, 1971) state apparatus.

It seems, therefore, that each of the major assumptions of scientific educational administration is under attack on the home territory from which it was drawn. Serious doubts maybe entertained therefore regarding the adequacy of its assumptions and the legitimacy of its dominance of the field.

If the scientific components of educational administration are under attack so are the educational tenets. A parallel educational critique is developing which argues that the dominant rational/technical model of control in education is based upon assumptions regarding:

a) The law-like nature of scientific propositions which specify clearly relations of cause and effect and therefore allow the possibility of technical control,
b) The objective nature of true knowledge and its neutrality in the face of human interests and needs and,
c) A conception of education which separates fact from value and employs models of inquiry which are functional rather than historical or social.

(Bates, 1980: 9)

Moreover, the net affect of such assumptions is argued to be the construction of an administrative system devoted to the depoliticising of cultural transmission, the denial of the validity of certain social political and moral questions and the trivialisation of socialisation (see Anyon, 1979; Aronowitz, 1977; Bates, 1980c; Giroux, 1979, 1980; Popkewitz, 1979, 1980).

Essentially the ideological challenge to the dominant model of scientific educational administration denies its objectivity, its neutrality in the face of competing interests, and its logical adequacy. The claim for scientific status is seen in itself as an ideological claim which masks the bureaucratic and professional interests of administrators and mystifies their social and political interests (Bates, 1980b, 1980c; Callaghan, 1962; Larson, 1977; Popkewitz, 1979). The major complaint is that by treating schools as technical systems the predominant model of educational administration denies both the reality and validity of the meanings, intentions and interests of the individuals who inhabit them (Greenfield, 1973, 1975, 1979). In short it denies people their culture.

The Empirical Challenge

Curiously for a profession which legitimated its position and power by appeal to science (whether it be the early appeals to scientific management or later appeals to a prospective scientific theory of educational

administration,) educational administration has a long tradition of breast-beating over the inadequacies of its empirical base. Charters' (1978), lament over 'acres of disjointed, theoretically barren, non-cumulative and downright shoddy studies' is perhaps the most colourful comment, but it is widely supported by other reviews of the field. Iannoccone, for instance, observes that the scientists of educational administration have largely 'produced studies which are methodologically bad, theoretically useless and which are focussed on trivial problems' (1973; 1965). The critique is general (Erickson, 1979; Halpin and Hayes, 1977; Immegart, 1977). The blame is apportioned between academics:

> Bluntly the professoriate in educational administration is just not interested in research or in the study of administration.
>
> (Halpin and Hayes, 1977; 280)

and practitioners who:

> Make little use of research, tend not to read scholarly publications and even inhibit researchers wanting to collect data in the field.
>
> (Immegart, 1977; 319)

Indeed, the lack of a specifically professional focus of concern and investigation is emphasised by Iannaccone's observation that ' irreverance for scholarship has lead educational administration research into being truly irrelevant' (1973; 58).

With so small a commitment to empirical research it may well be historically surprising that an empirical challenge to the dominant paradigm could be mounted. The historical roots of this challenge lie in the emergence, not of an administrative theory of schooling, but in the sociological analysis of schools which developed during the 1950's (see Hoyle, 1969, 1973). Schools were taken in this research as exemplars of a particular kind or form of organisation, the study of which would allow the development of sociological theories of organisations. Indeed as Corwin (1967) put it 'sociologists [were] beginning to appreciate the relevance of educational organisations for extending and testing theory'. The initial result of such studies were

analyses of schools in terms of Weberian bureaucratic models (Goslin, 1965; Musgrave, 1968) or Parsonian systems models (see Miles, 1968). The outcome of such studies was the recognition that schools were only imperfect illustrations of the models (Hoyle, 1973).

There was a distinct temptation for administrators to use the results of these empirical descriptions of schools to 'improve' them by encouraging the development of more systematic processes of:

a goal clarification (in the face of evidence regarding the multiple, vague and conflictful nature of school goals)

b internal integration (in response to evidence of the lack of co-ordination between organisational members)

c task accomplishment (where the technology and means of accomplishment were vague, private and uncertain), and

d adaptation (where the links between school and community made the school vulnerable and defensive).

In this respect the essential questions was:

> Do we understand the essential processes of schools well enough to start improvement programs that have a reasonable chance of becoming self-operative and self-developmental?
>
> (Miles, 1968; 146)

The link between organisational analysis and school improvement based upon convergence of practice with model was clear. Schools, in this view, were still organisations whose purpose was to co-ordinate the technical work of education and they were frequently criticised for their failure to manage this work efficiently. This point is made clearly by Meyer, Scott and Deal:

> With few exceptions social researchers have examined schools from the vantage point offered by the technical theory of organisation. The standard social science portrait of the schools which emerges is of weak and ineffective organisations with little internal rational organisation of work, little capacity to produce useful effects as measured by student performance, and little ability to defend themselves from environmental intrusions.

> To a few, the schools seem to be fraudulent organisations; to others they are classic examples of organisational ineptitude.
>
> (1980: 6)

It has recently been suggested however that rather than the model being satisfactory and schools dilatory and ineffective it might be the case that as a framework for the analysis of schools the bureaucratic model of rationally integrated systems is inappropriate. Schools may in fact be different kinds of organisations.

In support of this view it is possible to point to a growing body of work in the ethnography of schooling which sits uncomfortably with the dominant organisational view. Studies of schools such as those of Cusick (1973, 1980), Jackson (1968), Mercurio (1972), Sarason (1971, 1972), Sharp and Green (1975), Smith and Keith (1971), Willis (1977), Wolcott (1977), and Woods (1979) for example are difficult to accommodate within the traditional paradigm. They do not, for instance, provide evidence of characteristic hierarchical structures, of well-developed divisions of labour, of systematic control by rules, of impersonal relations or steady progress through an occupational hierarchy which bureaucratic models of organisation suggest. They do not, in effect, appear to be such tightly integrated systems as either advocates or critics of the systems model of educational administration suggest.

An Alternative Model: Loose Coupling

It was precisely this difficulty in educational organisation theory to which Weick (1976) addressed the 'sensitising concept' of 'loose coupling'. The virtue of the concept lies in its possible reduction of the blindness induced by the dominant paradigm:

> Organisations as loosely coupled systems may not have been seen before because nobody believed in them or could afford to believe in them. It is conceivable that preoccupation with rationalised, tidy, efficient co-ordinated structures has blinded many practitioners as well as researchers to some of the attractive and unexpected properties of less rationalised and less tightly related clusters of events.
>
> (1976: 3)

The idea of loose coupling is gradually passing into the literature (Corwin, 1976; Fietler, 1980; Pajack, 1979; Weick, 1980; Willower, 1979). It seems to be a useful concept for promoting the search for alternative models of organisations and for their differentiation into a taxonomy based upon recognition of major differences in their form and rationale. Fietler (1980), for instance, argues that coupling can be used as one element that distinguishes bureaucratic (tightly coupled) organisations from voluntary (un-coupled) organisations with loosely coupled organisations (such as schools) located at some point in between.

Such an adaption of the loose-coupling metaphor might well assist in the development of comparative studies of organisations or indeed of a comparative analysis of the effects of tight and loose coupling on both internal and external activities of schools and on pupils and staff. This development might assist the achievement of more accurate empirical descriptions and explanations of educational organisations, but hardly seems powerful enough to provide a convincing alternative to the technical model described above.

The availability of the concept has, however, allowed and encouraged the development of an alternative explanation of educational organisations as representative of institutional structures based upon and legitimated by ideas quite different from those of the governing technical paradigm. The crucial distinction between organisational types has been argued to be that between technical organisation and institutional organisation (see Meyer and Rowan, 1977; 1978; Meyer, Scott and Deal, 1980).

The distinction they make is one between organisations whose structures arise from the need for the control of technical flows and those concerned with legitimation of their activities in response to external demands. The former technical organisation is characterised by tight internal coupling and loose external coupling. The latter, institutional, organisation is characterised by loose internal coupling but tight external coupling. In effect:

> The technical organisation faces towards its technical core and turns its back toward the environment. The institutional organisation turns its back on its technical core in order to concentrate on conformity to its institutional environment.
>
> (Meyer, Scott and Deal, 1980; 3)

Evidence is provided by Meyer, Scott and Deal of three characteristics of schools which support their definition as institutional rather than technical organisations. They point, for instance, to the wide degree of disensus between superintendents and principals and principals and their staff regarding the interpretation of educational policies:

> Superintendents and principals in the same district showed no special inclination to agree on explicitness of policies and principals showed no special agreement with teachers in their own schools in describing school policies.
>
> (Meyer, Deal and Scott, 1980; 10)

Similar evidence is provided by Bates (1971), Gross and Herriott (1965), and J. Meyer et al. (1978).

Secondly Meyer Deal and Scott argue that schools conform with institutional requirements of a ritualistic nature such as accreditation, credentialism, grading and curricular standardisation. Few of these 'institutional rules' relate directly to the effectiveness of instruction, but conformity to the rules legitimates the school in the eyes of its environment. Indeed:

> Schools which are in any way suspect in terms of their legitimacy or accreditation status suffer drastically lowered survival prospects irrespective of what evidence they have regarding their instructional effectiveness.
>
> (1980; 13)

Thirdly, while remaining stable in terms of the broad ritualistic catagories of the institutional rules, schools are highly responsive to their local environments (p. 14). This may be a particular characteristic of United States schools related to their localised political and financial structure, but the bandwagon effect of continuous educational innovation derivative of currently fashionable or progressive trends is not unknown elsewhere.

Finally, Meyer, Deal and Scott argue that typically higher degrees of local support for schools from both parents and students are based upon a combination of conformity with institutional categories and rules ('ours is a proper school of course') and the dynamics of (frequently cosmetic) innovation. Such criteria of evaluation are frequently preferred over the effectiveness of the schools technical performance.

The picture that emerges is one of schools legitimizing their activities not in terms of technical effectiveness but in terms of a) institutional rituals which indicate conformity to broad cultural norms and categories; b) the public presentation of innovations as indicators of energy and purpose and c) the cultivation of satisfaction and support in their local constituencies. These mechanisms are argued to 'buffer' the school against external technical control of their instructional processes. Indeed evidence exists of the low-level of standardisation of instructional and curricula processes in schools (Bidwell, 1965; Cusick, 1980; Lortie, 1973); of the inactivity of administrative control systems (Dornbusch and Scott, 1975); of low levels of survival of educational innovations (Pitman, 1980; Popkewitz, et al, 1980; Rowan, 1977). As Meyer Deal and Scott argue:

> Organisations as highly institutional environments organise around their core institutional elements with managers buffering their technical core from close regulation or inspection of either technical activities or work outputs.
>
> (1980; 25)

In short the tight coupling of internal elements typical of the technical organisation is contrasted with the loose coupling of institutional organisations. Simultaneously the technical organisation is argued to be loosely coupled from its surrounding environment while the institutional organisation is tightly coupled with it.

Towards an Understanding of Cultural Coupling

This argument is convincing as far as it goes but it appears that comparisons between various types of coupling is not only a matter of degree but also a matter of kind. For instance, technical organisations may have tight coupling of internal elements of the kind advocated by Ammentorp, Popper and Morris (1979), Emery, (1969), Simon (1965) or Taylor (1911), and institutional organisations may have tight external coupling of the kinds suggested by Meyer (1979), Meyer and Rowan (1977, 1978), and Meyer Scott and Deal (1980). But the nature of this coupling in technical organisations appears to centre around 'rational' demands and the coupling in institutional organisations around 'cultural' demands. One might therefore talk not only of loose and tight coupling but also of rational and cultural coupling.

Rational coupling is required, for instance, where the specification of unit relations within a control structure is the typical form of organisation. Legitimation of the structure is by appeal to criteria of efficiency and effectiveness, and the link to the external environment is a loose economic one. On the other hand, cultural coupling refers to the characteristic attempts of institutional organisations to employ myths, metaphors and ceremonial categories as processes of coupling between their components and with their environment. Legitimation of their activities is made through appeals to propriety, service and means.

If the rational/cultural distinction is added to the tight/loose distinction it may be possible to overcome some of the difficulties of the exclusive reliance on the tight/loose image. It is, for instance, possible that some school systems are indeed becoming more highly coupled internally as a result of particular environmental requirements. As Wilkes et al (1979) argue, the combined effects of centralisation and program evaluation requirements may well be leading to tighter coupling of both external relations and internal processes. Spady and Mitchell (1980) argue similarly that the competency movement is already bringing about tighter coupling of the internal elements of schools, moving instructional, curricula and evaluation procedures towards a more systematic and therefore legitimate style. Interpretation of these trends simply in terms of tighter or looser coupling leads to some confusion, for essentially what seems to be taking place is not only changes in the degree of coupling but also changes in the style i.e. a shift from cultural coupling in those schools towards more rational coupling. Thus the internal processes of schools are being subject to the 'rationalisation' process already existent in technical organisations. There is therefore both a shift in the degree and in the nature of couplings of the internal processes of schools. Similarly, it could be argued that the external coupling of schooling is also being subjected to shifts. Not, in this case, in terms of the degree of coupling for, if Meyer, Scott and Deal are correct, schools are already tightly coupled with their environments. Rather, the nature of the coupling is altering from a cultural coupling defined in terms of generalised cultural norms, rituals, ceremonies and categories of meaning towards a rational/technical definition of the cultural requirements of schools.

This latter shift from wider cultural requirements to narrower technical requirements in schools can also be interpreted as a form of

cultural shift where the rational coupling being demanded of the schools by their environments is part of the wider rationalisation of society along technical lines (Gouldner, 1976; Habermas, 1971, 1972, 1976). A distinction needs to be made, therefore, between rational coupling as a technical form of organisation and rationalisation as a legitimating ideology of cultural coupling. There are, of course, strong links between the ideology of rationalisation and the technology of rational coupling. Similarly, however, there are strong links between a broader view of culture and history and the appropriate forms of the organisation of institutional life.

It would seem useful, therefore, to extend the two dimensions of analysis proposed by Meyer Scott and Deal - tight/loose coupling and internal/external coupling -to include a third dimension, cultural/rational coupling where the former refers to the processes of cultural justification including norms, values and ideologies as they are mediated through metaphors, myths, rituals ceremonies and aesthetics, and where the latter refers to the rational structuring of activity according to processes of integration and systematisation legitimised by principles of efficiency and effectiveness.

Schools clearly exibit various degrees of tight and loose, internal and external, cultural and rational coupling depending upon their circumstances, composition and environment. The description of schools in such terms is therefore an empirical matter. If however our examination of schools is to in any way account for the richness and complexity of the couplings in which schools engage, a purely rational (technical) approach must be eschewed. For, if as Meyer and Rowan (1977, 1978) argue, the schools should be properly regarded as ritualised institutions dependent upon myth and ceremony for their legitimation and co-ordination, and if the present argument regarding the cultural dimensions of articulation and legitimation is conceded, a purely technical understanding of schools focussed on the specification and control of 'infimal units' will be incomplete and misleading. The cultural dimensions

of belief, aspiration, understanding and communication, as they are realised through metaphor, myth, ritual, ceremony and performance, must also be included in any full analysis of schools (Bates, 1981a, 1981b, Bates et al, 1981; Beyer, 1977; Codd, 1981; Eisner, 1976, 1979; Grumet, 1980; Jenkins, 1970; Wilcox, 1980; Willis, 1978).

Coupling and the Administrator

Coupling is not, then, simply a technical process that can be thought of as tight or loose or as occuring internally or externally. The cultural dimensions of coupling which are especially important in what Meyer Deal and Scott call institutional organisations imply cultural judgements and the arbitration of interests. As Hodgkinson (1978) points out, such activities are inevitably part of the processes of administration. Appeals to a science or technology of administration which is value free, technical, depoliticized and rational deny both the logic and cultural understanding and the day-to-day experience of administrators. Indeed, the activity of administrators can be as well analysed from a cultural perspective in terms of their rituals, myths, ceremonies, metaphors and stratifications as through any systems analysis of input, throughput and output. Indeed it seems probable that the work of administrators cannot be understood without consideration of such matters, for the whole idea of cultural coupling suggests that administrators may be figures in the negotiation of competing cultural views into the structure of the school. Studies of administrative cultures such as those conducted by Gallagher, 1973; Herriott and Gross, 1979; Rist, 1978; Smith and Pohland, 1974; Spindler, 1963; and Wolcott, 1973, 1977, indicate the importance of the values, assumptions and beliefs of administrators in negotiating with various other cultural groups.

Clearly, various cultural groups are coupled with schools and their administrative cultures in a variety of ways. Intellectual, class, ethnic, religious and sexual sub-cultures are, for instance, coupled with schools

through administrative cultures which mediate these couplings and provide a framework of sanctions whereby some couplings are legitimised and others de-legitimised (Burlinghame, 1980). Administration is therefore as much a rhetorical activity as a technical one, directed towards the mediation of cultural reproduction through the coupling of the internal culture of the schools with specific external cultures. This process is both a generalised process (in as much as it is subject to (coupled with) generalised political and institutional processes) and a localised process in terms of specific couplings with particular social, ethnic, religious, sexual, aesthetic and intellectual cultures available through the multiple memberships held by people constituting the internal culture and external context of particular schools.

Such a view however requires a different understanding on the part of administrators: a major shift from emphases on efficiency and effectiveness and technical procedures of resource allocation, prescription, evaluation and control towards an understanding of the cultural aspects of schools as social systems. In effect this also demands a shift in the criteria of legitimation of administrative activity away from legitimation by appeal to the mythology and rituals of business towards legitimation by appeal to educational criteria. What might such a shift entail?

Educational Administration and the New Sociology of Education

Over the past decade, both in England and the United States as well as in Europe, many of the structures and processes of educational systems have been subject to careful scrutiny by a new generation of sociologists. The main objective of these sociologists was to question previously unquestioned assumptions lying behind the investigation of educational activities (see Bates, 1980d, 1981c; Esland, 1971; Young, 1971). Central

to their perspective are a series of questions concerning whose particular interests are served by a particular educational practices and how educational practices might be altered to broaden (or indeed transform) the nature of the interests presently incorporated in educational practice. Central to their argument was the assertion that:

> How a society selects, classifies, distributes, transmits and evaluates the educational knowledge it considers to be public reflects both the distribution of power and the principles of social control.
>
> (Bernstein, 1975; 85)

Thus, it was argued, that significant parallels between social and educational structures were supported in schools through the imposition of the culture of dominant social interests, whether they were class-based (Bernstein, 1975; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977), or the result of economic (Bowles and Gintis, 1976), or technical (Apple, 1979) dominance.

Schools were seen to be not only serving a technical function in the production of certain skills and behaviours but also confering continuities in social status and legitimising particular forms of social order. Crudely put, schools were seen as preserving the status quo and the extension of dominant social interests rather than as agencies of social reform. In this sense the new sociology of education, though beginning from somewhat different premises, has a great deal in common with a tradition of educational ethnography in the United States which has:

> Been conducted on the basis of a general set of orienting assumptions about the nature of cultural transmission and the role of schools in society. The orienting statements which have guided research have been extremely important in that they have consistently contradicted the dominant technocratic approach to education.
>
> (Wilcox, 1980; 65)

The corollaries of the argument of both the new sociology of education and educational ethnography are significant in their recognition that education systems are typically neither truly educative (in that they deny

access to certain kinds of knowledge and learning to particular social groups - working class, minority ethnic groups and women for instance) nor truly just (in that both resources and benefits are concentrated on the already privileged at the expense of the disadvantaged). The basic arguments and evidence provided by the new sociologists of education have transformed the nature of debate in the sociology of education from a narrowly empirical science towards a broader social science which incorporates the study of ideology, domination and legitimation into its analysis of particular situations (Giroux, 1980a; Whitty, 1980).

This transformation is not without its significance for educational administration. For if educational administration is, as is argued above, a process of negotiating cultural claims and their legitimation within the culture of the school, then the analysis of such issues is a necessary background to administrative action.

Cultural Negotiation, Message Systems and Administrative Power

Current debate in the sociology of education centres around detailed analysis of the three fundamental message systems of the school: curriculum, pedagogy, and evaluation.

> Curriculum defines what counts as knowledge, pedagogy defines what counts as valid transmission of knowledge; and evaluation defines what counts as valid realisation of this knowledge on the part of the pupil.
>
> (Bernstein, 1975; 85)

Each of these message systems can be treated in a purely technical manner whereby the 'relevance' of knowledge the 'efficiency' of transmission and the 'accuracy' of measurement are the criteria of administrative evaluation. Alternatively, and this is the task both sociologists and ethnographers have undertaken, the message systems can be 'unpacked' and the cultural content the systems of stratification, the nuances of meaning and communication can

be illuminated and the principles of control implicit in their structure can be exposed. Considerable progress is being made in the analysis of various curricula message systems (Apple, 1979, 1980; Bernstein, 1975; Giroux, 1979, 1980a, 1980b); in the analysis of pedagogy (Anyon, 1979, 1980; Esland, 1971; Popkewitz, 1979, 1981; Young, R, 1979, 1980) and the examination of evaluation (Broadfoot, 1979, 1980).

The issues raised by such an analyses of these message systems and their operation in schools speaks directly to the task of the administrator in assisting the adjudication and legitimation of various cultural couplings within the school and between the school and its various competing external cultures. In this respect it is well to acknowledge Hodgkinson's observation that:

> Administration is a value-laden, even value-saturated enterprise. The conventional wisdom would sustain this, no practical administrator would deny it.
>
> (1978; 122)

But the advantage of a model of cultural coupling goes beyond the re-establishment of links between administration and moral and social philosophy. It also presents a theoretical perspective within which the long-standing divergence of administrative theory from the practice of educational administration can be reconciled. Moreover, it presents a theoretical perspective which avoids the sterility and irrelevance of the pursuit of the 'completely deductive theoretical system' proposed by members of a scientific theory movement in educational administration (see Bates, 1980).

An administrative theory of cultural coupling can, for instance, be securely located within the theoretical traditions of cultural anthropology and the new sociology of education, both of which perspectives offer tools for the analysis of school culture and activity. Thus a secure theoretical foundation can be layed which is tied to the cultural character and purposes of education rather than the narrower concentration on system efficiency and effectiveness implicit in the rationalised model of educational systems.

Moreover because of the incorporation into these theoretical perspectives of issues in epistemology (Bates, 1980a, Freeman and Jones, 1980), aesthetics (Beyer, 1977; Bowers, 1977, 1980; Vulliamy, 1978) and social and political philosophy (Hodgkinson, 1978; Whitty and Young, 1976; Young and Whitty, 1977) there is a distinct possibility of a development of a coherent and comprehensive critical theory of administration which goes well beyond the narrow bounds and taken for granted assumptions of positivist approaches to a science of educational administration.

The cultural analyses on which such a critical theory might be based are also likely to be closer to the lived experience of principals and educators whose day-to-day activity is a continuing round of adjudication and legitimation of competing claims and values (Cusick, 1980; Ortiz, 1980; Wolcott, 1973, 1977). Moreover if the curricular, pedagogical, and evaluative message systems of the schools are taken as the focus of such cultural negotiations, and the culture of the administrator seen as a mediating structure in such negotiations, we might also meet the criticisms of Erickson (1979) that the study of educational administration has largely ignored matters such as the organisation of instruction, the organisation of pedagogy and their relation to student outcomes. One of the results of such an analysis might be a better understanding of the limits as well as the uses and abuses of administrative power (Erickson, 1972). We might even begin to understand the cultural basis of the legitimation of such power and its relation to the processes of cultural negotiation in which the administrator is inextricably bound.

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